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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Fifty-eighth session
Items 9 (a) and 11 (e) of the provisional agenda

QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD, INCLUDING: QUESTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN CYPRUS

CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS, INCLUDING THE QUESTION OF: RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE

Letter dated 16 October 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Cyprus to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit to Your Excellency three letters from the Most Reverent Metropolitan Pavlos of Kyrenia concerning the destruction and desecration of churches in Turkish occupied villages in the district of Kyrenia. Two of the letters, dated 18 June and 4 July 2001, are addressed to the Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations in Cyprus, and the third one, dated 23 July 2001, is addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

I should be grateful if the present letter along with the texts of the three letters* from the Most Reverent Metropolitan Pavlos of Kyrenia could be circulated as a document of the fifty-eighth session of the Commission on Human Rights under agenda item 9 (a) "Question of human rights in Cyprus", and item 11 (e) "Religious Intolerance".

(Signed): Alexandros VIKIS
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

* Reproduced as received, in the language of submission only

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Annex

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΚΥΡΗΝΙΑΣ

Αχιλλέως 3 Λυκαυτία
Τ.Θ. 298, Αριθμοί 2112

His Excellency
Mr. Zbigniew WLOSOWICZ.
Acting Special Representative of the Secretary -General of the UN in Cyprus,
Nicosia.

Your Excellency,

We, the Metropolitan of the occupied Holy Diocese of Kyrenia, express our grave concern and strong protest to your Excellency for the outrageous news learned from the Turkish Cypriot newspaper, AVRUPA on Friday 16. 6. 01, that the interior of the church of Panaghia of Thermia in the illegally occupied village of Thermia at Kyrenia District has been destroyed, and that on the interior walls of the church was written with graffiti «*You, soldier that you enter here, do not leave without going to stool*». The newspaper also published that the illegally excavated Greek Orthodox nearby cemetery will be turned into a restaurant and a night club.

We draw your attention to the fact that the systematic plundering of our religious and cultural heritage and the destruction and shattering of every Christian symbol in our holy island began as soon as Cyprus was occupied by the Turkish troops in 1974. Since then, historical religious places have been continuously looted without any barrier.

This is outrageous, especially when one considers that the Government of the Republic of Cyprus is keeping and maintaining every mosque and shrine of the Muslim faith even in the most remote village of the free part of the island. The same could be said for the Greek Orthodox population who respect not only the Muslim but every shrine of whatever denomination, which exists in the island. The mosques in the non occupied areas are having services frequently which are attended by Muslim diplomats, visitors and tourists.

Turkey still occupying by force part of our island, has not only stripped our churches from their icons, frescoes and sacred vessels but even changed many of them into Muslim mosques, store-rooms and latrines.

We ask you to join us in our efforts to get everything we rightly own back by raising a voice of protest against the continuous violation of human rights in Cyprus by Turkey and taking whatever measures you might consider appropriate to safeguard our human rights including our religious and cultural heritage.

Yours sincerely.

† Ὁ Κυρηνείας Παῦλος Δ. Phil (Oxon)

The Most Revd. Metropolitan Pavlos of Kyrenia

The Holy Diocese of Kyrenia
Nicosia, 18 June 2001.

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΚΥΡΗΝΕΙΑΣ
Αχιλλέως 3 Λευκωσία
Τ.Θ. 258, Λευκωσία 2112

His Excellency
Mr. Kofi Anan,
The Secretary-General of the United Nations,
New York, U.S.A

Your Excellency,

We, the Metropolitan of the occupied Greek Orthodox Holy Diocese of Kyrenia, express our deep concern and strongest protest to your Excellency for the outrageous news learned from the Greek Cypriot newspaper, «*POLITIS*» today, that the Church of the Virgin Mary, on the outskirts of Trimithi village in the Kyrenia Diocese has been changed to a college of Art.

According to the publication, the illegal British estate Agency *Ian Smith* which specializes in selling the stolen property of the Greek Cypriot refugees announces that the Church has been «*renovated*» and that the management of the establishment was undertaken by a «*British College of Art*» which will set up on the premises of the Church the «*Levantine College of Art*».

The Denktash illegal regime, which stripped our churches of holy relics and valuable icons, is casting aside this small token of humanity- not in the shadows of a thief, but advertised in the bright light of a defiant criminal, daring to challenge his actions.

I remind you of a similar protest I made on 13 May 1996 about an advertisement of the British/Turkish Cypriot estate Agency *Keskin & Smith*, published in the *Cyprus Today* newspaper on 11 May 1996, relating to the «*leasehold*» of the same church.

These acts constitute a blatant violation of human rights. We hold you responsible for not taking any action to implement and restore international law to the whole island of Cyprus. I call on your Organization to offer sanctuary and protection to our churches in the occupied area of Cyprus just as the Government of the Republic of Cyprus has preserved and protected every mosque, shrine and cemetery in the free areas of the island.

Yours sincerely,

+ Ο Κυρηνείας Παύλος

The Most Revd. Metropolitan Pavlos of Kyrenia (D. Phil. Oxon)

The Kyrenia Holy Diocese
Nicosia, 4 July, 2001.

Ο ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΤΗΣ ΚΥΡΗΝΕΙΑΣ
ΠΑΥΛΟΣ

Αγχίαλου 3, Λευκωσία
Τ.Θ. 25Ν, Λευκωσία 2112

His Excellency
Mr. Koffi Anan,
The Secretary- General of The United Nations,
New York.

Your Excellency,

We, the Metropolitan of the occupied Holy Diocese of Kyrenia, express our sacred exasperation, and strong protest to your Excellency for the news learned today from the Turkish Cypriot newspaper «*AVRUPA*» Monday 23.7.01. that the Greek Orthodox cemetery situated nearby the church of Panaghia of Thermia in the illegally occupied village of Thermia at Kyrenia District is illegally excavated by the pseudo regime of Denktash for the purpose of converting it into an entertainment night club. This act constitutes an outrageous violation of our human rights in Cyprus by Turkey.

I remind you of a similar protest I made on 18 June 2001 about the destruction of the interior of the same church and the systematic plundering of our religious and cultural heritage by the Turkish troops.

We hold your Organization responsible for not taking any action to implement justice and restore international law throughout Cyprus by forcing Turkey to comply with international law.

Yours sincerely,

† Ὁ Κυρηνείας Παῦλος

The Most Revd. Metropolitan Pavlos of Kyrenia D. Phil. (Oxon.)

The Holy Diocese of Kyrenia,
Nicosia, 23 July, 2001.